



CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONFERENCE
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3784

CHRISTOPHER C. HEALY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEACON DAVID W. REYNOLDS
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

ANNE S. LAMONICA
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
FOR EDUCATION

LORI A. STEWART
LEGISLATIVE LIAISON

**Judiciary Committee
Public Hearing, March 22, 2019**

Testimony in Opposition to

S.B. 1085 "An Act Concerning the Legalization of the Retail Sale and Possession of Cannabis and Concerning Erasure of Criminal Records in the Case of Convictions Based on the Possession of a Small Amount of Cannabis"

The Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference, the public policy office of Connecticut's Catholic Bishops, is *opposed* to S.B. 1085 due to the negative impacts the legalization of marijuana would have on the residents of our state, including those under 21 years of age. The need to raise state funds, or the desire to respect individual freedom, does not outweigh the negative impact the legalization of recreational marijuana will have on our society. Our state and nation are currently fighting a major opioid problem which has destroyed many lives. Catholic social teaching states that "the use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offense."¹ This offense is against the individual and society. The members of the Judiciary Committee must act to protect the common good and not open the doors for another drug-related epidemic to develop.

Many individuals and organizations will attempt to convince the Judiciary Committee that legalizing recreational marijuana will have little impact on society. This is blatantly untrue. The more a mood and mind-altering drug is used in society, the greater the number of adults and minors who will be negatively impacted. The fact that marijuana has a negative impact on individuals is once again shown in a study released this week and published in the well-respected British medical journal *The Lancet*. This study revealed that "Daily cannabis use was associated with **increased odds of psychotic disorder** compared with never users..., increasing to **nearly five-times** increased odds for daily use of high-potency types of cannabis."²

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church (#2291)

² "The Contribution of Cannabis Use to Variation in the Incidence to Variation in Psychotic Disorder Across Europe". *The Lancet*, March 19, 2019

The Conference believes that in addition to the increased cases of psychotic episodes among users the following factors also *cannot* be ignored:

1. **It is not the same as alcohol** - When you consume alcohol, it has its effects, and then leaves the body. When you use marijuana, it gets into the tissues of the body and is stored in the fatty tissue of the body, which includes the brain.
2. **Affects newborn babies** - The THC in marijuana today is four to five times stronger than in the 1980s. It can be passed on to babies in high concentrations in breast milk and has been shown to cause harm in developing brains. Research suggests babies exposed to marijuana in utero may develop verbal, memory and behavioral problems during early childhood.
3. **Sending the wrong message to teens** - Although S.B.1085 makes the sale of marijuana illegal to those under 21 years of age, the adult community is sending a clear (but incorrect) message that it is not really harmful. In 2014, soon after legalization, young people in Colorado ranked first in the nation in marijuana use. The use and abuse of marijuana by youth increased by 20%.³
4. **Traffic Accidents and Fatalities** - Traffic deaths increased by 48% soon after legalization in Colorado. 21% of those individuals killed tested positive for marijuana.⁴

Based on the factors listed above, and out of concern for the health and quality of life of the citizens of Connecticut, the Conference urges the Judiciary Committee to reject S.B. 1085.

Deacon David Reynolds
Associate Director for Public Policy
Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference

³ Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado, The Impact, Volume 4, September 2016.

⁴ Ibid